

[0080] We Claim:

1. A system for managing and transacting business in a component-based industry, comprising:
  - at least one database, for storing information about materials used in the industry, for storing information about at least one supplier, and for tracking the materials offered by the at least one supplier;
  - at least one server;
  - business management software running on the at least one server, wherein such business management software allows the at least one supplier to access and manage the information stored in the at least one database;
  - a quotation request entry interface, for use by a buyer;
  - a quotation request processor; and,
  - a marketplace interface, for facilitating commercial transactions.
2. The business management and transaction system of Claim 1, wherein the quotation request processor receives quotations entered through the quotation request entry interface and correlates the quotation entries with information stored in the at least one database to generate at least one request for quotation.
3. The business management and transaction system of Claim 2, wherein separate requests for quotation are generated for each of the at least one suppliers whose materials appear on the request for quotation.
4. The business management and transaction system of Claim 3, wherein the requests for quotation generated for each of the at least one suppliers contain only the materials offered by the supplier for whom the quotation is generated.
5. The business management and transaction system of Claim 1, wherein the marketplace allows the buyer to search materials stored in the at least one database.
6. The business management and transaction system of Claim 1, wherein the marketplace allows the buyer to purchase materials from a plurality of the at least one suppliers in a single transaction.
7. The business management and transaction system of Claim 1, wherein the marketplace allows the at least one supplier to create a privately labeled storefront from which at least one material can be purchased.

8. The business management and transaction system of Claim 1, wherein the business management software manages inventory information for at least one of the suppliers.
9. The business management and transaction system of Claim 8, wherein the business management software also tracks accounts payable and accounts receivable.
10. The business management and transaction system of Claim 9, wherein the business management software also performs standard payroll accounting functions.
11. The business management and transaction system of Claim 1, further comprising a virtual trade show interface.
12. The business management and transaction system of Claim 1, further comprising a material auction interface.
13. The business management and transaction system of Claim 12, wherein the material auction interface uses a single, sealed bid auction format.